

CASE STUDY: FUSE National Multicultural Youth Summit

MYAN Australia



FUSE is a three-day national summit for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, bringing them together for a range of workshops, fun activities and team building. FUSE also provides a unique opportunity for sharing ideas and networking with other young emerging leaders from across Australia. At FUSE, delegates work together over the three days to develop ideas and explore key issues facing young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia.

FUSE is designed as a skills development opportunity, equipping young people to participate in the organisations they are involved in, as well as more broadly in their communities and society. The summit begins with warm up games and activities, to enable young people to "break the ice" and get to know each other. The young people then take part in a series of practical workshops, designed to provide them with key skills in areas such as leadership, public speaking, advocacy and creating change.

As well as providing skills development, FUSE provides opportunities for young people to develop their networks - both with other young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds interested in creating positive change, and with organisations that can assist them with this. This includes organisations whose purpose is to support refugees, and migrants, young people and students, as well as issues-based organisations. This happens through a series of short presentations, followed by a "marketplace" where young people can meet and talk with representatives of the various organisations.

On the final day, young people have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills by working in small groups to plan and deliver a group presentation to VIPs - such as Members of Parliament, Government Ministers, and state and Commonwealth Commissioners. Through their presentations, young people advocate on behalf of refugee and migrant young people and present their voices direct to key decision makers in Australia.

FUSE was developed out of a recognition that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds often have fewer opportunities than other young people to develop a sense of agency and to build social capital. By this we mean building the skills, knowledge, processes, networks and confidence to have their say and influence the world around them.

FUSE draws on both youth participation and youth work frameworks. This means that as well as providing young people with opportunities to have a voice about the issues and organisations they care about - which is a youth participation approach - MYAN also offers young people training and support from experienced adult workers, based on the youth work approach.

Young people's involvement in planning the program for first FUSE summit was fairly limited. However, the event led to significant changes in the way MYAN operates. A Youth Advisory Network was established after FUSE, with representatives from each state and territory. These young people were heavily involved in planning and running the second FUSE summit. A young person's staff position was also created, in order to capture and model best practice in youth participation for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and the organisations that work with them.

MYAN has also learnt a lot about youth participation from running FUSE. This includes the importance of believing in young people's abilities and trusting them to deliver; being clear and honest about the limits and parameters of young people's participation in each activity or event; and the importance of providing a nurturing and supportive environment that allows young people to take risks and try new things. MYAN is a richer organisation today due to the things it has learned through FUSE.

To find out more about fuse go to <http://www.myan.org.au/our-work-with-young-people/148/>